

Document made available under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT)

International application number: PCT/US04/021173

International filing date: 30 June 2004 (30.06.2004)

Document type: Certified copy of priority document

Document details: Country/Office: US
Number: 60/485,292
Filing date: 07 July 2003 (07.07.2003)

Date of receipt at the International Bureau: 16 August 2004 (16.08.2004)

Remark: Priority document submitted or transmitted to the International Bureau in compliance with Rule 17.1(a) or (b)



World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) - Geneva, Switzerland
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APPLICATION NUMBER: 60/485,292
FILING DATE: *July 07, 2003*
RELATED PCT APPLICATION NUMBER: *PCT/US04/21173*

Certified by



Jon W Dudas

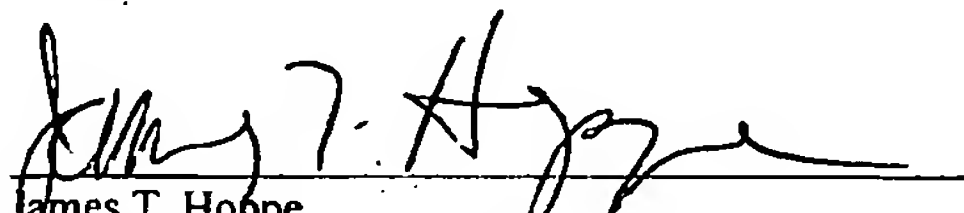
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PROVISIONAL APPLICATION COVER SHEET

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Docket Number		63190	Type a plus sign (+) inside this box	+
INVENTOR(s)/APPLICANT(s)				
LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	MIDDLE INITIAL	RESIDENCE (CITY AND EITHER STATE OR FOREIGN COUNTRY)	
Martinez	Felipe		Houston, Texas	
<input type="checkbox"/> Additional inventors are being named on separately numbered sheets attached hereto				
TITLE OF THE INVENTION (280 characters max)				
THIN FOAMED POLYOLEFIN SHEETS				
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ENCLOSED APPLICATION PARTS (check all that apply)				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Specification	Number of Pages	17	<input type="checkbox"/> Small Entity Statement	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drawing(s)	Number of Sheets	1	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)	
METHOD OF PAYMENT (check one)				
<input type="checkbox"/> A check or money order is enclosed to cover the Provisional filing fees			PROVISIONAL FILING FEE AMOUNT	\$160.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge filing fees and credit Deposit Account Number: 04-1512				
The invention was made by an agency of the United States Government or under a contract with an agency of the United States Government				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No				
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the name of the U.S. Government agency and the Government contract number are:				

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DATE OF DEPOSIT: July 7, 2003

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PROVISIONAL APPLICATION FILING ONLY

THIN FOAMED POLYETHYLENE SHEETS

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention relates to thin foamed polyethylene sheets, particularly those at gauges between 1 and 10 mils. These sheets have comparable MD tear strength as nonfoamed sheets of the same gauge and composition. The invention also relates to the process of making such foamed sheets.

10 The thin sheets or films of the present invention are used in many applications, particularly in blown-film applications including consumer trash bags, grocery bags, produce bags, pallet wrap, food wrap, liners, heavy duty bags, industrial bags, consumer bags, shrink films, labels, pouches for FFS packaging, tapes, stand-up pouches, lamination films, protective films and the like. In the polyolefin industry, there has been a general trend to produce new high strength polymer resins. These resins have allowed film producers to downguage their product without sacrificing film strength or toughness. These thinner products have not been
15 universally accepted however, as the perception of films of having a limp or flimsy feel. Accordingly, it is desired to produce films of greater thickness. It is not cost effective to simply use more resin to make a thicker sheet however, because of the cost of additional raw material. It is generally known that polyolefin resins can be foamed in order to produce a thicker film with the same amount of resin. It is generally understood, however that properties such as
20 tensile strength, impact strength and elongation are related to density, and that the foaming process results in a product having less density. Thus, prior films or thin sheets made from foamed polyolefin material lacked adequate strength.

High pressure LDPE resins have been used in foaming applications due to their relatively high melt strength and easy processing. However, when making a foamed sheet at
25 gauges between 1 and 8 mils using conventional blown film processes with these resins, excessive orientation results, which in turns leads to very poor results in MD (machine direction) tear strength. Accordingly there is a need for thin films of reduced density which still exhibit acceptable physical properties, particularly MD tear strength.

Some reported solutions to the problem of increasing physical properties in thin foamed
30 sheets include US 4,657,811 and US 4,533,578 which provide for coextrusion of unfoamed

skin layers around the foamed layer. This method achieves the increase in tear strength at the expense of complexity of the film structure and lower overall density.

It is also generally known from work with thicker foam sheets that crosslinking provides molecular ties and that these molecular ties enhance physical/mechanical properties such as tensile strength, tear strength, higher temperature resistance, etc. As discussed in "Foamed Films Find New Niches", *Plastics Technology Online*, Jan H. Schut, Feb 2002), crosslinking is also being investigated as a way to improve mechanical support of thin foamed films. Crosslinking adds cost and complexity to the process, and results in material which cannot be easily recycled, and is therefore is less than ideal solution.

Yet another approach to improve physical properties is bi-orientation. As discussed in the Schut article mentioned above, traditional tenter frame bi-axial orientation for cast films are typically done in the semi-solid phase using a two step process (machine and transverse-direction orientation), usually ending in collapsing of the foam cells. Traditional Blown film process can achieve simultaneous orientation both in the machine direction and in the transverse direction, being able to apply up to 3:1 MD and 4:1 TD orientation levels, while the polymer is in the semi-molten state. Some new orientation methods reported in the Schut article claim to be able to have apply a bi-axial orientation of 3.5:1 in MD and 4.5:1 TD while the polymer is in the solid state, which gives even higher strength. In conventional (non-foamed) film extrusion it is known that the use of Linear Low Density Polyethylene (LLDPE) resins, especially those having fractional Melt Index (MI) and lower density, helps to improve MD tear properties. It is generally believed that resins with lower density and lower MI (higher molecular weight) produce better physical toughness. It is also known that for conventional films the use of high blow-up ratio (BUR) in processing the resin provides balanced machine direction/cross (or "transverse") direction orientation which improves overall film toughness.

For foamed applications, a blowing agent is added, which can be either a physical blowing agent such as dissolved isobutane, or a chemical blowing agent (CBA), or both, as is generally known in the art.. CBA is generally used when density reduction below 50% are desired. When more that 50% density reduction is desired, physical Blowing agents are preferably injected into the extruder, while CBA are still used in smaller amounts as bubble nucleators. CBAs require higher temperatures in order to activate the CBA and ensure

adequate mixing. As the CBA is activated, small gaseous bubbles are formed and mixed throughout the matrix of the polymer, but the gas produced around these bubbles remains in solution in the polymer melt as long as the polymer melt pressure remains high. As the melt exits the die its pressure drops rapidly allowing the dissolved gas to come out of solution and causing the small bubbles to grow. The bubble growth will gradually stop as the polymer crystallizes as the film cools down. If the polymer has a viscosity which is too low, due to high melt temperatures or due to high melt flow index of the polymer, or if it does not have enough melt strength, the formed cells have a tendency to coalesce and eventually burst so the polymer melt will not retain all the bubbles, resulting in poor foaming. Thus, viscosity levels and melt strength are important considerations for foamed applications. While it would appear that using low melt index (high molecular weight) resins would also be helpful in making the melt more viscous, it was observed that such resins generated unwanted shear heating, causing the melt temperature to rise too much making foaming difficult. In general, these higher temperatures act to decrease the viscosity, and this effect counters the benefit obtained from starting with the more viscous resin.

LLDPE resins are known to have poor melt strength and this property is further reduced as the Melt index of the polymer is increased (that is, the molecular weight is reduced). For this reason the use of these resins in non cross linked foaming applications has been limited to blends in small amounts where the major component is a high melt strength polymer like Low Density Polyethylene, (LDPE).

Accordingly, the methods of increasing MD tear strength traditionally used for conventional films, (such as the use of low Melt index LLDPE resins or use of pure or rich blends of LLDPE resins in general) are not necessarily applicable for foamed films and thus no foamed sheets having a thickness of 1 to 10 mil are known to possess adequate tear strengths, particularly MD tear strengths.

Surprisingly, it has been found that by using particular blends of LLDPE and LDPE together with specific fabrication conditions, foamed sheets of thin gauge can be made with MD tear properties similar to an equivalent gauge non-foamed sheet of the same composition. In particular, blends which combine a high MI LLDPE rich fraction with a low MI branched LDPE minor fraction provide the adequate balance of mechanical strength of the polymer base

with its melt strength, extensibility and stress relaxation, allowing a thin foam film with MD tear strength which is comparable to non foamed counterparts of similar gauge and composition. The lower the density of this high MI LLDPE resin the better the MD tear but at the expense of film modulus. Thus, the foamed films of the present invention are thin
5 (generally from about 1 to 10 mils thick), and have an MD tear strength of at least about 160 grams for a 3 mil film as measured by ASTM D 1922. . The foamed films of the present invention are preferably made at least in part from blends which comprise from 10 to 95 percent by weight of LLDPE having a relatively high (1.5 to 6) MI and from 5 to 90 percent of an LDPE resin having a relatively low MI (0.5 to 2.0).

10 The fabrication conditions should be chosen to minimize cell size and minimize areas of concentrated stress. Such conditions include things such as optimizing die type, land length, die gaps, BUR, pressure and temperature profiles, line speed and output.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

15 For purposes of the present invention "foamed sheets" or "foamed films" should be understood to include a single layer in a multilayer structure where the other layers may or may not be foamed sheets of the present invention, or a monolayer film, where the foamed sheet of the present invention is the only layer present.

20 The foamed sheet of the present invention is preferably at least about 1 mils (25 microns) thick. While the foamed sheets can theoretically be made even thinner than this, tear strength rapidly decreases as the size of the bubbles which give the sheet its foamed characteristic, approach or exceed the size of the thickness of the sheet itself. The foamed sheets of the present invention are preferably no more than about 10 mils (250 microns) thick,
25 as thicker sheets typically do not need the added tear strength achieved by the present invention. If additional strength is needed for a particular application however, thicker sheets could be made according to the teaching of the present invention.. More preferably, the foamed sheets are less than or equal to about 8 mils(200 microns), still more preferably 5 mils (125 microns) or less, and most preferably are about 2-3 mils (50 to 75 microns) thick.

For purposes of this invention the sheet shall be considered to be foamed if it exhibits a density reduction of at least 10 percent, as determined by an archimedes based method, or approximated by the equation $\text{density} = \text{film volume} / \text{film weight}$. It should readily be understood that greater reductions in density are possible, particularly in thicker films. It should be noted, however that tear strength generally drops with greater reductions in density, and so may be a limiting factor for a particular film. In general reductions in density of between 20 and 50% are most preferred for the thin films of the present invention. More preferably, the films exhibit a density reduction of at least about 25%, and most preferably at least about 30%, with a more preferable maximum of about 40%, and a most preferred reduction of density of no more than about 35%.

The foamed sheets of the present invention have increased physical properties compared to previous foamed sheets of similar thickness. For example the foamed sheets of the present invention have a tear strength in the machine direction of at least 160 grams for a sheet of 3 mil thickness, as measured by ASTM D 1922 Elmendorf tear type B method. Preferably the MD tear strength of this 3 mil foamed film is at least 250 g, more preferably 360 g and most preferably above about 525 gr, which is similar to the MD tear strength of non foamed films of the same composition. A foamed sheet of the present invention having a thickness of approximately 3 mil (75 micron) also preferably have a tear strength in the CD direction of at least 650 gr, more preferably 800 gr and most preferably above about 1000 gr. At a thickness of 3 mil and above (75 micron), it was observed that the relationship between film thickness and tear strength was generally linear. Thus, it is preferred that the MD tear strength of the foamed film be greater than about 50 grams/mil, more preferably greater than about 100 grams/mil, even more preferably greater than about 200 grams/mil and most preferably greater than about 350 grams/mil. Films with a thickness less than approximately 3 mils show slightly reduced MD tear strength, however a film with a thickness of less than 3mil should exhibit an MD tear strength of at least 25 grams/mil, more preferably greater than about 50 grams/mil, even more preferably greater than about 75 grams/mil and most preferably greater than about 100 grams/mil.

The foamed sheets of the present invention also preferably exhibit increased gas transmission properties. Surprisingly, it has been observed that the gas transmission properties

of these films typically increases more than would be expected when considering only the reduction in density. Preferably the films of the present invention exhibit a water vapor transmission rate of at least 0.5 g /100sq.in*day at 3 mils gauge (normalized 1.5 g*mil /100sq.in*day as measured according to ASTM F1249-90, more preferably greater than 0.65 g /100sq.in*day (normalized 1.95 g*mil /100sq.in*day). Similarly, the foamed sheets of the present invention preferably exhibit an oxygen vapor transmission of at least 200 cc/100 sq.in*day (normalized 600 cc*mil/100 in.sq*day as measured by ASTM method D3985-81, more preferably greater than 270 cc/100 sq.in*day (normalized 877.5 cc*mil/100 in.sq*day).

The films of the present invention exhibit equivalent to lower blocking when processed in blown film equipment, as compared with nonfoamed sheets of the same composition and gauge. They have a pearlescent appearance and a soft and silky textile touch with appeal to various consumer, hygiene and packaging markets. Due to its foamed nature, less amount of resin is required to provide an equivalent perceived thickness. Or, the same amount of material gives a higher perceived thickness, proportional to its density reduction. Also its foamed nature provides perceived sound and temperature insulation properties as well as added cushioning properties when compared to non foamed films of the same composition. The films of the present invention also exhibit static cling reduction and reduced blocking, so could be used in protective film applications without the need for antislip or anitblock additives.

Films of the present invention can be easily printed with reduced levels or even elimination of corona treatment due to its natural surface roughness which provides and enhances mechanical binding to the ink.

While not intending to be bound by theory, it is hypothesized that the increased tear properties and overall toughness may be related to the foamed sheets of the present invention having a very fine cell structure with homogeneously dispersed bubbles. The preferably rich LLDPE blends of the present invention can produce a very small and homogeneous cell structure showing between 60 to 100 cells per inch in the machine direction, and about 90 to 120 cells per inch in the transverse direction. The thicker films (8 mils) will give the smaller cells when viewed in the MD direction (about 100 cells/inch), while the thin films (2 mils) give larger cells (about 60 cells/inch) as the cells are gradually elongated in the machine direction and narrowed in the transverse direction as the film is thinned down. Accordingly, when viewed in the

transverse direction it will have thinner elongated bubbles which will show a higher cell count (about 90 cells/inch in a 2 mil film and 120 cells/inch in an 8 mil film). It is also theorized that the foamed sheets of the present invention exhibit lower crystalline orientation when compared to both LDPE rich blend counterparts, and even to some very rich LLDPE blends (>80%). The lower crystalline orientation would then contribute to explain the improved MD tear and toughness seen in the unique blends used in the foamed films of the present invention

Another variable in the foamed sheets of the present invention is the amount of collapsed cells and/or bubble coalescence observed in the foamed sheets. Larger cells resulting from coalescence can cause a weak spot in the sheet, and thus should be avoided. Similarly, collapsed cells may weaken the overall properties of the sheets without providing any density reduction benefit.

The foamed sheets of the present invention can advantageously be made from polyolefin blends of LLDPE having a relatively high melt index (as compared with LLDPE resins normally used in blown film applications) and LDPE with a fractional MI. The preferred blends of the present invention have an LLDPE component with a density range of from 0.912 to 0.925 g/cc (as measured by ASTM D-792), and a melt index (I_2) of 1.5 to 6 (as measured by ASTM D-1238 (190°C/2.16 kg). More preferably the LLDPE has an MI in the range of 2.0 to 4.5. The LLDPE suitable for use in the present invention are generally as described for component A in U.S. patent application 2003/0032731, herein incorporated by reference in its entirety. Accordingly they may be homogeneous or heterogeneous polymers and can be made according to any means known in the art.

The LLDPE suitable for use in the present invention can be an interpolymers of ethylene with at least one C_3 - C_{20} alpha-olefin, as stated in U.S. 2003/0032731. Preferably the LLDPE is a copolymer of ethylene with butene, hexene, or octene, with octene being the most preferred. The LLDPE may be linear (that is, with no long chain branching) or substantially linear. The LLDPE may advantageously be made using a gas phase process or a solution process as is known in the art. Similarly, the catalyst used to make the LLDPE is not limited and includes ziegler-natta type catalysts as well as metallocenes.

In general, it has been observed that using LLDPE resins with lower MI was observed to cause more shear heating making difficult to keep melt temperature low enough for good

foamability. Additionally low MI resins cause excessive orientation in the final foamed film, causing a low MD tear properties. On the other hand, it was also observed that using LLDPE with higher MI led to difficulties in foaming due to loss in melt strength. The use of lower density LLDPE resins contribute to better MD tear properties, but, it reduces the film Secant modulus which can be undesirable in some packaging applications. Accordingly, the polymer selection can be manipulated to optimize the required processability, melt strength, melt extensibility and stress relaxation to make a microcellular foamed film structure with relaxed and balanced MD/TD tear properties for a particular manufacturing system.

The LDPE component of the preferred blends for use in the present invention have a density range of from 0.917 to 0.925 g/cc (as measured by ASTM D-792), and a melt index (I_2) of 0.2 to 7.0, more preferably less than about 2, and most preferably less than about 1.0 (as measured by ASTM D-1238 (190°C/2.16 kg)). Preferably, the MI is less than about 3, more preferably less than about 2, and is greater than about 0.5.

The LDPE resin used is a branched homopolymer or interpolymer made in tubular or autoclave reactors at pressures above 14,500 PSI (100 Mpa) with the use of free radical initiators. The LDPE suitable for use in the present invention can be selected from the broad class of compounds described as component B in US 2003/0032731. Accordingly, the LDPE is preferably an ethylene homopolymer but can be an interpolymer with one or more alpha or beta ethylenically unsaturated comonomers such as acrylic acid, methacrylic acid and vinyl acetate. Similarly, the catalyst used to make the LDPE is not limited and includes ziegler-natta type catalysts as well as metallocenes.

The LDPE component can also be optimized for a particular system, following the same general trends as for the LLDPE component. Thus, an LDPE with a lower MI is associated with increased melt strength but also causes shear heating making difficult to keep melt temperature low enough for good foamability. Additionally low MI resins have been associated with excessive orientation in the final foamed film, causing a low MD tear properties. On the other hand, it was also observed that using higher MI resins led to difficulties in foaming due to loss in melt strength. The use of lower density LDPE resins contribute to better MD tear properties, but, it reduces the film Secant modulus which can be undesirable in some packaging applications.

Preferably the blend comprises at least 10% by weight of the LLDPE more preferably at least 30% and most preferably about 70%. The blend ideally comprises 90% or less by weight of the LLDPE and more preferably less than 80 %, although higher amounts may be possible. The blend preferably comprises at least 10% by weight of the LDPE more preferably at least 18 % and most preferably about 30%. The blend ideally comprises less than 70% by weight of the LDPE and more preferably less than 30%. It should be readily understood that the blend can be optimized, depending upon the particular system. In general the LLDPE portion contributes more to the tear strength properties, whereas the LDPE portion aids in processability and foamability. Thus, for example, if a relatively high MI LLDPE is used, then processability may not be as big of an issue and therefore the LLDPE portion may comprise a larger proportion of the blend. Similarly, a high MI LDPE (for example, up to about 6 MI) can be used but may require higher loading of it (for example 30 to 70% by weight LDPE) in order to achieve a blend with higher melt strength properties. The blend also contains a chemical blowing agent (CBA), which can be added by any means known in the art. The use of CBA and other foaming agents is exemplified by the teachings to processes of making ethylenic polymer foam structures and processing them in Chapter 9 of the "Handbook of polymeric Foams and Technology" entitled "Polyolefin Foam", written by C.P. Park, edited by D. Klempner and K.C. Frisch, Hanser Publishers, Munich, Vienna, New York Barcelona (1991), which is herein incorporated in reference. One preferred method is to add an endothermic CBA based on sodium bicarbonate and citric acid in a 20% to 50% LDPE masterbatch. The CBA should be added such that the amount of active CBA in the blend is at least 0.25% by weight, more preferably 0.4 % and most preferably about 0.6%. The CBA is preferably not added in amount such that it exceeds 1.0 % more preferably 0.6 %.

Minor amounts of other materials may also advantageously be used in the blend used to make the foamed sheets of the present invention. These include other polymer to provide added melt strength, foamability, stiffness like PS, SBR , PP, SBS slip additives to provide necessary coefficient of friction (COF) and pigments to provide coloring. PIB type additives may be added to provide enhanced cling features to the films . Process aids could also be added to help reduce shear heating, particularly when using lower MI blends. Other additives such as UV stabilizers, anti-static or fire retardants may be necessary to provide required functionality

for specific applications, as is generally known in the art. These other materials should not be added in an amount greater than 2%, more preferably 0.5%% and most preferably 0.1% depending on the additive.

5 The fabrication conditions for making the foamed sheets of the present invention also play a role in obtaining thin sheets with high tear strength. Typically, a medium shear barrier screw is used but it is also possible to use other screw designs including twin screws, and general purpose polyethylene, PP and PS screws.. The screw should be able to have good mixing capabilities to efficiently disperse the CBA and homogenize the blend, be capable of processing LLDPE rich blends without generating excessive shear. It should be capable of
10 building and maintaining pressure through the extruder to deliver a homogenous melt at high pressures (about 3000 to 6000) PSI to the adapter and die. Pressure through out the die should be maintained high up to the die lips where a sudden pressure drop occurs in order to minimize prefoaming prior to the die exit. The type of extrusion die used can be a common monolayer spider type die designed for high or low pressure operation. Low pressure dies, typically used
15 for LLDPE film extrusion have demonstrated to provide less potential pressure variations, that can lead to premature foaming (prefoaming inside the die). The die gap should be no larger than about 80 mils (thousands of an inch) (2.0 mm), preferably no larger than about 50 mils (1.3 mm) and most preferably no larger than about 20 mils (0.5 mm). In general larger die gaps were observed to be related to larger foam bubble structure in the foaming process, which is
20 believed to be caused by prefoaming and bubble coalescence inside the die. Larger die gaps are known to cause more unwanted MD orientation. When larger foam bubbles are obtained the film does not have the pearlescent effect and soft touch seen in smaller microcellular cell type foamed films which were obtained with narrower gaps.

The Land Length of the die (the length of the parallel section of the die lips) has an
25 important effect in assuring a fast pressure drop at the die lips, with minimum orientation of the molecules and low shear heating minimizing unwanted prefoaming inside the die. Ratios of the *land length / die gap* should be below 25, more preferably below 15 and most preferably below 12. These smaller ratios are preferred in order to obtain small microcellular foam responsible for the pearlescent aesthetics.

The extruder should use a reverse temperature profile with a peak temperature of about 450°F, in order to fully activate the CBA. There is also ideally a gradual decent to a die lip temperature of about 340°F. The process should have a high RPM (60 to 80% of the maximum RPM), for example about 90 to 110 RPM for a 2 1/2 in extruder, with high throughput (low residence times), for example 6 - 10 lbs/hr/rpm. High throughput is equivalent to low residence time) and a fast pressure drop (5000 +PSI at the screen pack down to 1200 psi (or higher) at the die for as few seconds before the die gap and down to atmospheric pressure at the die exit when foam growth takes place. Ideal pressures in the extruder can vary from about 3000 to about 6500 psi, while pressures at the die are ideally at or above about 800 psi. If the pressure at the die drops below 600 to 700 PSI, prefoaming inside the die is likely to result, leading to bigger and fewer bubbles and poor aesthetics. Having pressure above 5000 psi at the screen pack helps to maintain a resultant pressure at the die above 1200 psi after the initial pressure drop, which helps ensure that the polymer reaches the die lips with minimal amounts of foaming occurring until the die exit.

A high BUR was also seen to be beneficial for forming the thin foamed sheets of the present invention. It is preferred that the ratio be from about 2.2 to 4.0 BUR, more preferably from about 2.5 to about 3.5:1. BURs above this range tended to cause problems in forming a stable bubble whereas BURs below this range tended to be associated with a film having very unbalanced properties, particularly very low MD tear values. The use of internal bubble cooling (IBC) can provide additional cooling and help stability of foaming process.,

It should be readily appreciated by one skilled in the art, that the blend components and fabrication conditions can be chosen to optimize the chance of successfully making a thin foamed sheet of the present invention.

The following examples are illustrative of the invention, but are not intended to limit the scope of the invention in any way.

Examples

Thin sheets were formed from the LDPE and LLDPE resins indicated in Table I. Resin A is LDPE with a Melt Index (MI) (at 190°C/2.16 kg) of 2.3 and a density of 0.920. Resin B is LDPE with an MI of 0.47 gr/10 min and a density of 0.920. Resin C is LLDPE with an MI of 0.5 and a density of 0.920. Resin D is LLDPE with an MI of 1.0 and a density of 0.920. Resin

E is LLDPE with an MI of 2.3 and a density of 0.917. Resin F is an ULDPE with MI of 4 and density of 0.904 gr/cc. The Chemical Blowing Agent or CBA used was SAFOAM FPE-50 which contains 50% of active ingredient of encapsulated sodium salts of carbonic and polycarboxylic acids, in a polyethylene carrier. 3 mil gauge films were produced using a 2.5 inch extruder equipped with an 8 inch low pressure die and medium shear barrier screw. A 40 mil die lip with 1/2 inch land length was used. The line was run at 220 lbs/hr rate. MD tear strength was then measured according to ASTM D 1922 Elmendorf type B method. Puncture Propagation Tear (PPT) was determined according to ASTM D-2582-93.

TABLE 1

Sample #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Resin formulation												
Resin A	68	69	68.5	68.5	68.5	30	30					
Resin B								30	68.5	68.5	30	30
Resin C	30	30	30	30								
Resin D					30	68.5						
Resin E							68.5	68.5	30			68.5
Resin F										30	68.5	
Safoam FPE-50 (%)	2	0.5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Blow Up Ratio	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2
Film Properties												
Gauge (mils)	3.1	2.9	3.09	2.94	3	2.87	2.87	3.03	3.09	2.42	2.83	3
Density reduction (%)	31.6	4.5	30.1	21.1	18.3	18.5	23	26.4	21.7	6.2	14.1	22.7
MD Elmendorf Tear (g)	41	234	99.6	200	144	212	381	520	216	198	578	406
PPT Tear (cm)	12.4	4.78	0	6.48	7.24	8.74	8.14	6.86	4.94	5.16	6.1	8.4
Processing conditions												
RPM		73.1	73.1	73.1	73.1	71.3	73.1	73.1	73.1	73.1	73.1	104.1
Output Lbs/hr		151	147	144	145	155	158	159	150	168	154	224.4
Melt Temperature F		365	366	368	366	383	375	381	376	374	372	396
Barrel P1 (PSI)		2820	2930	3110	3060	3430	3630	3980	4020	3980	3700	4440

10

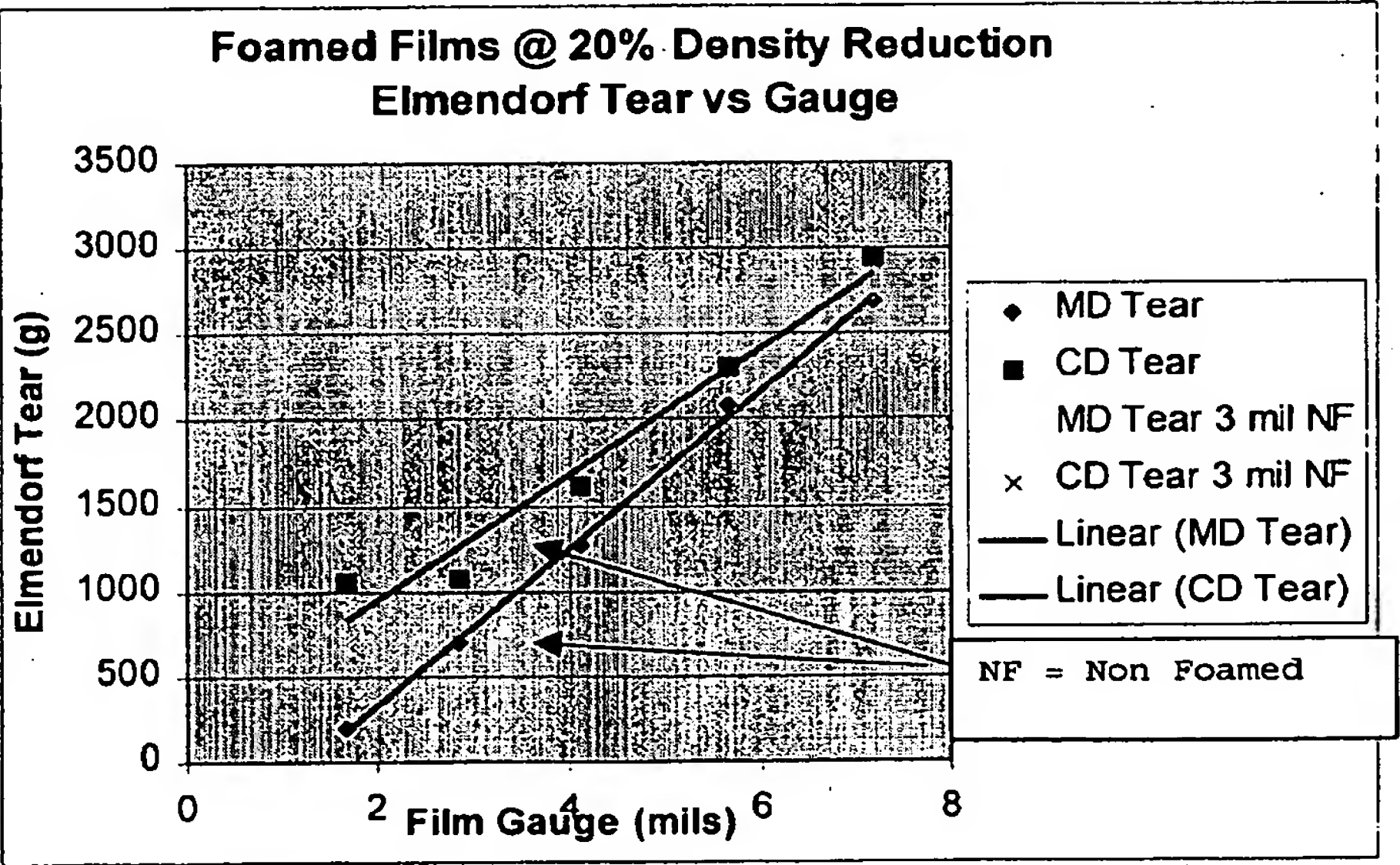
Foamed films with gauges ranging from 2 to 8 mils were produced using Sample #8 (see table above) with 2.5% by weight of a masterbatch containing eurucamide as a slip (total active ingredient was only 1.25 % eurucamide). Sample 13 was not foamed and serves as a

comparison. These films were analyzed to determine MD and CD tear, elongation, yield and peak load, and the values are reported in Table 2, and a graph of tear strength vs. gauge of film is presented in Figure 1. MD Tear was done using ASTM D1922, and Tensile properties (Elongation, Yield and load at .. were done using ASTM D882.

Table II

	13	14	15	16	17	18
MD Tear	778.3	192.6	699.6	1272	2086.6	2684
CD Tear	1323	1054	1069	1612	2307	2944
Av Gauge	3.32	1.68	2.85	4.12	5.66	7.17
Avg MD Load @ 2% (Lb)	1.47	0.634	1.068	1.668	2.464	3.192
Avg CD Load @ 2% (Lb)	1.636	0.704	1.204	1.594	2.454	3.098
AV Md Elongation	435.27	425.042	589.037	584.623	648.101	513.239
Av CD ELongation	810.308	268.076	388.962	512.047	616.32	587.657
MD Yield lbs	4.917	1.922	3.92	5.12	7.78	9.289
CD Yield Lb	4.556	1.46	2.778	4.389	6.76	9.07

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A series of 3 mil gauge films were prepared in identical fashion, varying only the LDPE and LLDPE content (so that the total amount is 100%). The LDPE used was Resin B and the LLDPE used was resin Resin E. Resin G is a ULDPE with a MI of 5.5 and a density of 0.918. The melt strength and extensibility was measured and the resulting plots appear in Figure 2, which clearly displays the synergism achieved by the blends of the present invention. For this figure, Melt strength was determined using a Gottfert Rheotens unit at 190° C. The measurements were conducted by pulling strands of molten polymers or blends at constant acceleration until breakage occurred. Experimental set consisted of a capillary rheometer and a Rheotens apparatus as take-up device. The force required to axially extend the strands was recorded as a function of take up velocity. The maximum force attained before draw resonance or breakage was recorded as the melt strength in cN. The velocity in mm/sec at which this maximum force was recorded is defined as melt extensibility. The tests were done under the following conditions: Temperature = 190°C, Capillary length/diameter of 41.9mm/2.1 mm, Piston diameter 9.54 mm, piston velocity 0.423 mm/sec, shear rate 33 s.⁻¹. Draw-down distance 100 mm (die exit to take-up wheels). Cooling conditions at ambient air, and acceleration 2.4 mm/s.²

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A foamed polyolefin sheet of 3 to 8 mils thick having an MD tear strength of at least 150 gr/mil
- 5 2. The sheet of claim 1 wherein the sheet is about 3 mils (75 microns) thick
3. The sheet of Claim 1 wherein the MD tear strength is greater than 350 gr/mil
4. The sheet of Claim 1 wherein the oxygen vapor transmission is 2.18 gr.mil/100 in.sq*24 hr
- 10 5. The sheet of Claim 1 wherein the water vapor transmission is 270 cc.mil/100 in.sq*24 hr XXX
6. The sheet of claim 1 wherein the sheet has a density reduction of at least 20% compared to a non foamed sheet of the same composition.
7. The sheet of Claim 1 wherein the sheet is made from a blend comprising
- 15 10-90 % by weight LLDPE and 90-10% LDPE
8. The sheet of Claim 1 wherein the blend comprises 50% or more by weight of LLDPE.
9. The sheet of Claim 1 wherein the blend comprises about 70%by weight LLDPE.
- 20 10. The sheet of Claim 7 wherein the LLDPE has a density in the range of 0.900 to 0.930and an MI in the range of 2 and 6
11. The sheet of Claim 7 wherein the LDPE has a density in the range of 0.917 g/cc to 0.923 gr/cc and an MI in the range of 0.2 and 6
12. The sheet of Claim 1 wherein the sheet has been made using a land
- 25 length to die gap ratio of less than 25.
13. The sheet of Claim 1 wherein the sheet has been made using a blow up ratio of from about 2.2 to about 4.0.
14. The sheet of Claim 1 wherein there the polyolefin has substantially no crosslinking.

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15. In a process for producing a thin foamed sheet wherein a polymeric material is foamed and melt blown, the improvement comprising selecting as the polymeric material a blend comprising an LLDPE having a density in the range of 0.905 to 0.925 and an MI in the range of 0.5 and 6, and an LDPE has a density in the range of 0.917 to 0.923 and an MI in the range of 0.2 and 6.
- 10
16. The process of Claim 15 wherein when the film has a thickness of from 3 to 8 mils it has an MD tear strength of greater than 250 grams/mil and when the film has a thickness of less than 3 mils, then it has an MD tear strength of greater than about 75 grams/mil.
17. A foamed polyolefin sheet of less than 3 mils thick having an MD tear strength of at least 50 gr/mil.
18. The sheet of claim 17 wherein the sheet has a density reduction of at least 20% compared to a non foamed sheet of the same composition.
- 15
19. The sheet of Claim 17 wherein the sheet is made from a blend comprising 10-90 % by weight LLDPE and 90-10% LDPE .
20. The sheet of Claim 19 wherein the blend contains about 70% LLDPE.
21. The sheet of Claim 17 wherein the sheet has been made using a land length to die gap ratio of less than 25.
- 20
22. The sheet of Claim 17 wherein the sheet has been made using a blow up ratio of from about 2.2 to about 4.0.
- 25
23. A consumer trash bag, grocery bag, produce bag, pallet wrap, food wrap, liner, heavy duty bag, industrial bag, consumer bag, shrink film, label, pouches for FFS packaging, tape, stand-up pouch, lamination film, or protective film comprising the foamed sheet of claim 17.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

The present invention relates to the use of particular blends of LLDPE and LDPE together with specific fabrication conditions to make foamed sheets of thin gauge with MD tear properties similar to an equivalent gauge non-foamed sheet of the same composition. In particular, blends which combine a high MI LLDPE rich fraction with a low MI branched LDPE minor fraction provide the adequate balance of mechanical strength of the polymer base with its melt strength, extensibility and stress relaxation, allowing a thin foam film with MD tear strength which is comparable to non foamed counterparts of similar gauge and composition. The foamed films of the present invention are thin (generally from about 1 to 10 mils thick), and have an MD tear strength of at least about 160 grams for a 3 mil film as measured by ASTM D 1922. . The foamed films of the present invention are preferably made at least in part from blends which comprise from 10 to 95 percent by weight of LLDPE having a relatively high (1.5 to 6) MI and from 5 to 90 percent of an LDPE resin having a relatively low MI (0.5 to 2.0).

Figure 2

